

Network Etiquette

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The UHCC VAX (uhccux) connects to thousands of other computers throughout the world. These connections let you communicate both through one-on-one electronic mail and the network news system (USENET). This ability to communicate with so many people electronically requires that you adhere to the rules of network etiquette. The documents listed below will guide you in learning the rules of network behavior.

I suggest you at least glance at the documents below before posting your first network news article.

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Rules for Posting to USENET

Rules for Posting to USENET

Original-from: mark@cbosgd.att.com (Mark Horton)

[Most recent change: 29 November 1986 by spaf@gatech.edu]

This message describes some of the rules of conduct on Usenet. The rules vary depending on the newsgroup.

Some newsgroups are intended for discussions and some for announcements or queries. It is not usually a good idea to carry on discussions in newsgroups that are designated otherwise. It is never a good idea to carry on "meta-discussions" about whether a given discussion is appropriate -- such traffic mushrooms until nobody can find articles that belong. If you are unhappy with what some user said, send him/her mail, don't post it.

Before posting, think about where your article is going. If it's posted to a "comp", "news", "misc", "soc", "sci", "rec" or "talk" newsgroup, it will probably go to the USA, Canada, Europe, Korea, and Australia. Certain articles are only of local interest (e.g. used car ads) and it is inappropriate to post them to the whole world. Use the "Distribution" feature to restrict distribution to your local area. If you don't know how to use this feature, read "Frequently Submitted Items" in another article in mod.announce.newusers.

Don't post announcements regarding major news events (e.g. the space shuttle has just exploded!) to news groups. By the time most people receive such items, they will long since have been informed by conventional media. If you wish to discuss such an event on the net, use the "misc.headlines" newsgroup.

Announcement of professional products or services on Usenet is allowed; however, since someone else is paying the phone bills for this, it is important that it be of overall benefit to Usenet. Post to the appropriate newsgroup -- mod.newprod -- never to a general purpose newsgroup such as "misc.misc". Clearly mark your article as a product announcement in the subject. Never repeat these -- one article per product at the most; preferably group everything into one article. Advertising hype is especially frowned upon -- stick to technical facts. Obnoxious or inappropriate announcements or articles violating this policy will generally be rejected. This policy is, of course, subject to change if it becomes a problem.

Some newsgroups are moderated. In these groups, you cannot post directly, either by convention or because the software prevents it. To post to these newsgroups, send mail to the moderator. Examples:

<u>Newsgroup</u>	<u>Moderator</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
mod.announce	cbosgd!announce	Important announcements for everyone on the net
mod.std.c	cbosgd!std-c	ANSI C standards discussion
mod.std.unix	ut-sally!std-unix	ANSI Unix standards discussion
mod.std.mumps	plus5!std-mumps	ANSI Mumps standards discussion
mod.os.unix	cbosgd!unix	Moderated discussion of Unix* features and bugs

Some newsgroups have special purpose rules:

Rules for Posting to USENET

<u>Newsgroup</u>	<u>Rules</u>
mod.announce misc.wanted	Moderated, no direct postings, very important things only. Queries, "I want an x", "Anyone want my x?". No discussions. Don't post to more than one xxx.wanted. Use the smallest appropriate wanted (e.g. used car ads to nj.wanted). Requests for sources, termcaps, etc. should go to the "comp.sources.wanted" newsgroup.
rec.humor	Clean humor only; anything offensive must be rotated; no discussions--humor only. Discussions go in rec.humor.d rec.arts.movies. Don't post anything revealing part of a movie without marking it (spoiler) in the subject.
news.groups	Discussions about new groups: whether to create them and what to call them. Don't post yes/no votes, mail them to the author net.sources Big files such as source code, no discussions. Bugs and fixes get posted to comp.sources.bugs
misc.test	Use the smallest test group possible, e.g. "test" or "ucb.test". Say in the body of the message what you are testing.

It is perfectly legal to reproduce short extracts of a copyrighted work for critical purposes, but reproduction in whole is strictly and explicitly forbidden by US and international copyright law. (Otherwise, there would be no way for the artist to make money, and there would thus be less motive for people to go to the trouble of making their art available at all. The crime of theft is as serious in this context as any other, even though you may not have to pick locks, mask your face, or conceal merchandise.)

All opinions or statements made in messages posted to Usenet should be taken as the opinions of the person who wrote the message. They do not necessarily represent the opinions of the employer of that person, the owner of the computer from which the message was posted, or anyone involved with Usenet or the underlying networks of which Usenet is made up. All responsibility for statements made in Usenet messages rests with the individual posting the message.

Posting of information on Usenet is to be viewed as similar to publication. Because of this, do not post instructions for how to do some illegal act (such as jamming radar or obtaining cable TV service illegally); also do not ask how to do illegal acts by posting to the net.

If you have a standard signature you like to append to your articles, put it in a file called .signature in your home directory. "postnews" and "inews" will automatically append it to your article. Please keep your signatures concise, as people do not appreciate seeing lengthy signatures, nor paying the phone bills to repeatedly transmit them. 2 or 3 lines are usually plenty. Sometimes it is also appropriate to add another line or two for addresses on other major networks where you can be reached (e.g., ARPA, CSnet, Bitnet). Long signatures are definitely frowned upon. DO NOT include drawings, pictures, maps, or other graphics in your signature -- it is not the appropriate place for such material and viewed as rude by other readers.

Hints on writing style for Usenet

Original-from: ofut@gatech.edu (A. Jeff Offutt VI)

[Most recent change: 2 March 1985 by ofut@gatech.edu]

I would like to take a moment to share some of my knowledge of writing style. If you read the pointers below, remember: it's easy to agree that they make sense but it's much harder to apply them.

References:

Cunningham and Pearsall, How to Write For the World of Work

Strunk & White, Elements of Style

The above references are both excellent books. Cunningham is a standard in Tech writing classes and won an award for the best tech writing book from the Association for Teaching of Technical Writing. I was lucky enough to take a class from him as an undergraduate. Strunk is a standard in college composition classes. Other ideas here come from my own experience on the net and hints from other people.

This is a "long article". The rest of it is simply a list of pointers.

Writing style:

- * Write *below* the readers' reading level. The average person in the US reads on a 5th grade level. The average professional reads on about the 12th grade level.
- * Keep paragraphs short and sweet. Keep sentences shorter and sweeter. This means "concise," not cryptic.
- * White space is not wasted space -- it greatly improves clarity.
- * Pick your words to have only *one* meaning. Vagueness is considered artistic by literary critics. We are not being literary here.
- * People can only grasp about seven things at once. This means ideas in a paragraph, major sections, etc..
- * There are several variations on any one sentence. A passive, questioning or negative sentence takes longer to read.

Net style:

- * Subtlety is not communicated well in written form - especially over a computer.
- * The above applies to humor as well. (Net.jokes, of course, not included.)

USENET Writing Style

- * When being especially "flame-boyant", I find it helpful to go the bathroom before actually sending. Then, I often change the tone considerably.
- * Subject lines should be used very carefully. How much time have you wasted reading articles with a misleading subject line?
- * References need to be made. When you answer mail, you have the original message fresh in your mind. When I receive your answer, I don't.
- * It's *much* easier to read a mixture of upper and lower case letters.
- * Leaving out articles (such as "the," "a," "an," etc.) for "brevity" mangles the meaning of your sentences and takes longer to read. It saves you time at the expense of your reader.
- * Be careful of contextual meanings of words. For instance, I used "articles" just now. In the context of netnews, it has a different meaning than I intended.
- * Remember - this is an international network.
- * Remember - your future employers may be reading your articles.

'Nuff said.

These pointers are all easily supported by arguments and research. There's a lot more to say, but....

A Primer on How to Work With the USENET Community

A Primer on How to Work With the USENET Community

Original-from: chuq@sun.COM (Chuq Von Rospach)

[Most recent change: 7 December 1986 by spaf@gatech.edu]

Chuq Von Rospach

You now have access to Usenet, a big network of thousands of computers. Other documents or your system administrator will provide detailed technical documentation. This message describes the Usenet culture and customs that have developed over time. All new users should read this message to find out how Usenet works.

(Old users could read it, too, to refresh their memories.)

USENET is a large collection of computers that share data with each other. It is the people on these computers that make USENET worth the effort, and for USENET to function properly those people must be able to interact in productive ways. This document is intended as a guide to using the net in ways that will be pleasant and productive for everyone.

This document is not intended to teach you how to use USENET. Instead, it is a guide to using it politely, effectively and efficiently. Communication by computer is new to almost everybody, and there are certain aspects that can make it a frustrating experience until you get used to them. This document should help you avoid the worst traps.

The easiest way to learn how to use USENET is to watch how others use it. Start reading the news and try to figure out what people are doing and why. After a couple of weeks you will start understanding why certain things are done and what things shouldn't be done. There are documents available describing the technical details of how to use the software. These are different depending on which programs you use to access the news. You can get copies of these from your system administrator. If you do not know who that person is, they can be contacted on most systems by mailing to account *usenet*.

Never Forget that the Person on the Other Side is Human

Because your interaction with the network is through a computer it is easy to forget that there are people "out there." Situations arise where emotions erupt into a verbal free-for-all that can lead to hurt feelings.

Please remember that people all over the world are reading your words. Do not attack people if you cannot persuade them with your presentation of the facts. Screaming, cursing, and abusing others only serves to make people think less of you and less willing to help you when you need it.

If you are upset at something or someone, wait until you have had a chance to calm down and think about it. A cup of coffee or a good night's sleep works wonders on

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your perspective. Hasty words create more problems than they solve. Try not to say anything to others you would not say to them in person in a room full of people.

Be Brief

Never say in ten words what you can say in fewer. Say it succinctly and it will have a greater impact. Remember that the longer you make your article, the fewer people will bother to read it.

Your Postings Reflect Upon You -- Be Proud of Them

Most people on USENET will know you only by what you say and how well you say it. They may someday be your co-workers or friends. Take some time to make sure each posting is something that will not embarrass you later. Minimize your spelling errors and make sure that the article is easy to read and understand. Writing is an art and to do it well requires practice. Since much of how people judge you on the net is based on your writing, such time is well spent.

Use Descriptive Titles

The subject line of an article is there to enable a person with a limited amount of time to decide whether or not to read your article. Tell people what the article is about before they read it. A title like "Car for Sale" to rec.autos does not help as much as "66 MG Midget for sale: Beaverton OR." Don't expect people to read your article to find out what it is about because many of them won't bother. Some sites truncate the length of the subject line to 40 characters so keep your subjects short and to the point.

Think About Your Audience

When you post an article, think about the people you are trying to reach. Asking UNIX(*) questions on rec.autos will not reach as many of the people you want to reach as if you asked them on comp.unix.questions or comp.unix.wizards. Try to get the most appropriate audience for your message, not the widest.

It is considered bad form to post both to misc.misc, soc.net-people, or misc.wanted and to some other newsgroup. If it belongs in that other newsgroup, it does not belong in misc.misc, soc.net-people, or misc.wanted.

If your message is of interest to a limited geographic area (apartments, car sales, meetings, concerts, etc.), restrict the distribution of the message to your local area. Some areas have special newsgroups with geographical limitations, and the recent versions of the news software allow you to limit the distribution of material sent to world-wide newsgroups. Check with your system administrator to see what newsgroups are available and how to use them.

If you want to try a test of something, do not use a world-wide newsgroup! Messages in misc.misc that say "This is a test" are likely to cause large numbers of caustic messages to flow into your mailbox. There are newsgroups that are local to your

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computer or area that should be used. Your system administrator can tell you what they are.

Be Careful with Humor and Sarcasm

Without the voice inflections and body language of personal communications, it is easy for a remark meant to be funny to be misinterpreted. Subtle humor tends to get lost, so take steps to make sure that people realize you are trying to be funny. The net has developed a symbol called the smiley face. It looks like ":-)" and points out sections of articles with humorous intent. No matter how broad the humor or satire, it is safer to remind people that you are being funny.

But also be aware that quite frequently satire is posted without any explicit indications. If an article outrages you strongly, you should ask yourself if it just may have been unmarked satire. Several self-proclaimed connoisseurs refuse to use smiley faces, so take heed or you may make a temporary *net.fool* of yourself.

Only Post a Message Once

Avoid posting messages to more than one newsgroup unless you are sure it is appropriate. If you do post to multiple newsgroups, do not post to each group separately. Instead, specify all the groups on a single copy of the message. This reduces network overhead and lets people who subscribe to more than one of those groups see the message once instead of having to wade through each copy.

Please Rotate Messages With Questionable Content

Certain newsgroups (such as rec.humor) have messages in them that may be offensive to some people. To make sure that these messages are not read unless they are explicitly requested, these messages should be encrypted. The standard encryption method is to rotate each letter by thirteen characters so that an "a" becomes an "n". This is known on the network as "rot13" and when you rotate a message the word "rot13" should be in the "Subject:" line. Most of the software used to read usenet articles have some way of encrypting and decrypting messages. Your system administrator can tell you how the software on your system works, or you can use the Unix command

```
tr [a-z][A-Z] [n-z][a-m][N-Z][A-M]
```

Note that some versions of Unix don't require the [] in the "tr" command. In fact, some systems will get upset if you use them in an unquoted manner. The following should work for everyone, but may be shortened on some systems:

```
tr '[a-m][n-z][A-M][N-Z]' '[n-z][a-m][N-Z][A-M]'
```

Don't forget the single quotes!

Summarize What You are Following Up

When you are following up someone's article, please summarize the parts of the article to which you are responding. This allows readers to appreciate your comments rather

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than trying to remember what the original article said. It is also possible for your response to get to some sites before the original article.

Summarization is best done by including appropriate quotes from the original article. Do not include the entire article since it will irritate the people who have already seen it. Even if you are responding to the entire article, summarize only the major points you are discussing.

When Summarizing, Summarize!

When you request information from the network, it is common courtesy to report your findings so that others can benefit as well. The best way of doing this is to take all the responses that you received and edit them into a single article that is posted to the places where you originally posted your question. Take the time to strip headers, combine duplicate information, and write a short summary. Try to credit the information to the people that sent it to you, where possible.

Use Mail, Don't Post a Follow-up

One of the biggest problems we have on the network is that when someone asks a question, many people send out identical answers. When this happens, dozens of identical answers pour through the net. Mail your answer to the person and suggest that they summarize to the network. This way the net will only see a single copy of the answers, no matter how many people answer the question.

If you post a question, please remind people to send you the answers by mail and offer to summarize them to the network.

Read All Follow-ups and Don't Repeat What Has Already Been Said

Before you submit a follow-up to a message, read the rest of the messages in the newsgroup to see whether someone has already said what you want to say. If someone has, don't repeat it.

Be Careful About Copyrights and Licenses

Once something is posted onto the network, it is effectively in the public domain. When posting material to the network, keep in mind that material that is UNIX-related may be restricted by the license you or your company signed with AT&T and be careful not to violate it. You should also be aware that posting movie reviews, song lyrics, or anything else published under a copyright could cause you, your company, or the net itself to be held liable for damages, so we highly recommend caution in using this material.

Cite Appropriate References

If you are using facts to support a cause, state where they came from. Don't take someone else's ideas and use them as your own. You don't want someone pretending that your ideas are theirs; show them the same respect.

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Mark or Rotate Answers and Spoilers

When you post something (like a movie review that discusses a detail of the plot) which might spoil a surprise for other people, please mark your message with a warning so that they can skip the message. Another alternative would be to use the "rot13" protocol to encrypt the message so it cannot be read accidentally. When you post a message with a spoiler in it make sure the word "spoiler" is part of the "Subject:" line.

Spelling Flames Considered Harmful

Every few months a plague descends on USENET called the spelling flame. It starts out when someone posts an article correcting the spelling or grammar in some article. The immediate result seems to be for everyone on the net to turn into a 6th grade English teacher and pick apart each other's postings for a few weeks. This is not productive and tends to cause people who used to be friends to get angry with each other.

It is important to remember that we all make mistakes, and that there are many users on the net who use English as a second language. If you feel that you must make a comment on the quality of a posting, please do so by mail, not on the network.

Don't Overdo Signatures

Signatures are nice, and many people can have a signature added to their postings automatically by placing it in a file called "\$HOME/.signature". Don't overdo it. Signatures can tell the world something about you, but keep them short. A signature that is longer than the message itself is considered to be in bad taste. The main purpose of a signature is to help people locate you on the net, not learn your life story. Every signature should include your return address relative to a well known site on the network. Your system administrator can give this to you.

Summary of Things to Remember

- Never forget that the person on the other side is human
- Be brief
- Your postings reflect upon you; be proud of them
- Use descriptive titles
- Think about your audience
- Be careful with humor and sarcasm
- Only post a message once
- Please rotate material with questionable content
- Summarize what you are following up
- Use mail, don't post a follow-up
- Read all follow-ups and don't repeat what has already been said
- Be careful about copyrights and licenses
- Cite appropriate references
- When summarizing, summarize
- Mark or rotate answers or spoilers
- Spelling flames considered harmful

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Don't overdo signatures

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Frequently Asked Questions on USENET

Frequently Asked Questions on USENET

Original-from: jerry@eagle.UUCP (Jerry Schwarz)

[Most recent change: 31 January 1987 by spaf@gatech.edu]

This document discusses some items that occur repeatedly on Usenet. They frequently are submitted by new users, and result in many followups, sometimes swamping groups for weeks. The purpose of this note is to head off these annoying events by answering some questions and warning about the inevitable consequence of asking others. If you don't like these answers let spaf@gatech.edu know.

1. What does UNIX stand for?

It is not an acronym, but is a pun on "MULTICS". MULTICS is a large operating system that was being developed shortly before UNIX was created.

2. What is the derivation of "foo" as a filler word?

The favorite story is that it comes from "fubar" which is an acronym for "fouled up beyond all recognition", which is supposed to be a military term. (Various forms of this exist, "fouled" usually being replaced by a stronger word.) "Foo" and "Bar" have the same derivation.

3. Is a machine at "foo" on the net?

These questions belong in news.config if anywhere, but in fact your best bet is usually to phone somebody at "foo" to find out. If you don't know anybody at "foo" you can always try calling and asking for the "comp center." Also, see the newsgroup mod.map where maps of Usenet and the uucp network are posted regularly.

4. What does "rc" at the end of files like .news.rc mean?

I'm not sure of the exact history. It seems to be related to the phrase "run command". It is used for any file that contains startup information for a command. One belief is that the "rc" stands for "ReConfiguration" which is what the file does.

5. What do "- (nf)" and "Orphaned Response" in an item's title mean?

It means that the item was created by "notesfiles," an alternative netnews interface that some people prefer. If you want to find out more you can contact uiucdcs!essick. The "(nf)" indicates that the article was gatewayed into the regular news system by an old version of news software; newer versions create header lines showing the "notes" information rather than putting the "(nf)" flag in the subject line.

This interface is also the source of "Orphaned Response" items. The actual meaning of Orphaned Response has to do with the fact that the "notesfiles" system groups messages by subject and only stores one copy of the subject. Because of the way messages move around on the net, sometimes they get out of order and "notes" loses track of the subject. When this happens it fills in "Orphaned Response" as a default subject. This

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is fixed in recent versions of "notes" but not every site is running up-to-date code (unfortunately).

6. What does :-) mean?

This is the net convention for a "smiley face". It means that something is being said in jest. If it doesn't look like a smiley face to you, flop your head over to the left and look again.

7. How do I decrypt jokes in rec.humor?

The standard cipher used in net.jokes is called "rot13." Each letter is replaced by the letter 13 farther along in the alphabet (cycling around at the end). Most systems have a built-in command to decrypt such articles; readnews has the "D" command, rn has the "X" or "^X" commands, notes has "%" or "R". If your system doesn't have a program to encrypt and decrypt these, you can quickly create a shell script using "tr":

```
tr A-Za-z N-ZA-Mn-za-m
```

On some versions of Unix, the "tr" command should be written as:

```
tr "[a-m][n-z][A-M][N-Z]" "[n-z][a-m][N-Z][A-M]"
```

8. misc.misc or misc.wanted: Is John Doe out there anywhere?

I suspect that these items are people looking for Freshman roommates that they haven't seen in ten years. If you have some idea where the person is you are usually better off calling the organization. For example, if you call any Bell Labs location and request John Doe's number they can give it to you even if he works at a different location. If you must try the net, use newsgroup soc.net-people NOT misc.misc or misc.wanted.

9. sci.math: Proofs that 1=0.

Almost everyone has seen one or more of these in high school. They are almost always based on either division by 0 or taking the square root of a negative number.

10. rec.games: Where can I get the source for empire or rogue?

You can't get the source of rogue. The authors of the game, as is their right, have chosen not to make the sources available.

You can obtain the source to a version of empire if you provide a tape and SASE plus a photocopy of your Unix source license. To obtain further info, contact mcnc!rtisel!polyof!john. You can also call John at +1 516 454-5191 (9am-9pm EST only).

11. comp.unix.wizards: How do I remove files with non-ASCII characters in their names?

You can try to find a pattern that uniquely identifies the file. This sometimes fails because a peculiarity of some shells is that they strip off the high order bit of

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characters in command lines. Next, you can try an `rm -i`, or `rm -r`. Finally, you can mess around with i-node numbers and "find".

12. **comp.unix.wizards:** There is a bug in the way UNIX handles protection for programs that run `suid`.

There are indeed problems with the treatment of protection in `setuid` programs. When this is brought up, suggestions for changes range from implementing a full capability list arrangement to new kernel calls for allowing more control over when the effective id is used and when the real id is used to control accesses. Sooner or later you can expect this to be improved. For now you just have to live with it.

13. **soc.women:** What do you think about abortion?

Although abortion might appear to be an appropriate topic for `soc.women`, more heat than light is generated when it is brought up. All abortion-related discussion should take place in the newsgroup `talk.abortion`. If your site administrators have chosen not to receive this group, you should respect this and not post articles about abortion at all.

14. **soc.singles:** What do MOTOS, MOTSS, and MOTAS stand for?

Member of the opposite sex, member of the same sex, and member of the appropriate sex, respectively. SO stands for "significant other".

15. **soc.singles and elsewhere:** What does HASA stand for?

The acronym HASA originated with the Heathen and Atheistic SCUM Alliance; the Hedonistic Asti-Spumante Alliance, Heroes Against Spaghetti Altering, the Society for Creative Atheism (SCATHE), SASA, SALSA, PASTA, and many others too numerous to mention all followed. HASA started in `talk.religion.misc` and also turns up in `soc.singles`, `talk.bizarre`, et al. because members post there too.

16. **sci.space.shuttle:** Shouldn't this group be merged with `sci.space`?

No. `sci.space.shuttle` is for timely news bulletins. `sci.space` is for discussions.

17. **How do I use the "Distribution" feature?**

When `postnews` prompts you for a distribution, it's asking how widely distributed you want your article. The set of possible replies is different, depending on where you are, but at the University of Hawaii, possibilities include (for example):

<code>uhawaii</code>	University wide:
<code>usa</code>	Everywhere in the USA
<code>na</code>	Everywhere in North America
<code>world</code>	Everywhere on Usenet in the world

If you hit return, you'll get the default, which is the first part of the newsgroup name. This default is often not appropriate -- PLEASE take a moment to think about how far

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away people are likely to be interested in what you have to say. Used car ads, housing wanted ads, and things for sale other than specialized equipment like computers certainly shouldn't be distributed to Europe and Korea, or even to the next state.

18. Why do some people put funny lines ("bug killers") at the beginning of their articles?

Some earlier versions of news had a bug which would drop the first 512 or 1024 bytes of text of certain articles. The bug was triggered whenever the article started with white space (a blank or a tab). A fix many people adopted was to begin their articles with a line containing a character other than white space. This gradually evolved into the habit of including amusing first lines.

The original bug has since been fixed in newer version of news, and sites running older versions of news have applied a patch to prevent articles from losing text. The "bug-killer" lines are therefore probably no longer needed, but they linger on. HOWEVER, new sites just installing the news from 4.2 BSD tapes are likely installing a version of news with the bug; the 4.2 distribution had a buggy version of news. If you know anyone running an unmodified news from the 4.2 BSD tape, have them obtain a more up-to-date version from someone else on the net.

19. What is the address or phone number of the "foo" company?

Try the white and yellow pages of your phone directory, first; a sales representative will surely know, and if you're a potential customer they will be who you're looking for. Phone books for other cities are usually available in libraries of any size. Whoever buys or recommends things for your company will probably have some buyer's guides or national company directories. Call or visit the reference desk of your library; they have several company and organization directories and many will answer questions like this over the phone. Remember if you only know the city where the company is, you can telephone to find out their full address or a dealer. The network is NOT a free resource, although it may look like that to some people. It is far better to spend a few minutes of your own time researching an answer rather than broadcast your laziness and/or ineptitude to the net.

20. What is the origin of the name "grep"?

The exact origin of the name is shrouded in the mists of prehistory, but one explanation is often given: The command `g/re/p` in the original UNIX text editor "ed" was used so often it was packaged up into a command that was obviously named "grep."

According to Kernighan/Plauger Software Tools in Pascal, it stands for "Globally look for Regular Expressions and Print."

21. How do I get from BITNET to UUCP, ARPA to BITNET, JANET etc etc.?

See the article "Notable Computer Networks" in Volume 29, #10 (October 1986) of the "Communications of the ACM" (CACM). The table on page 940 should provide the syntax needed. You should be able to derive the appropriate gateway from the postings in `mod.map`.

Frequently Asked Questions on USENET

22. Didn't some state once pass a law setting pi equal to 3 ?

Indiana House Bill #246 was introduced on 18 January 1897, and referred to the Committee on Canals "midst general cheerfulness." The text states, "the ratio of the diameter and circumference is as five-fourths to four", which makes pi 3.2 (not 3), but there are internal contradictions in the bill as well as contradictions with reality. The author was a mathematical crank. The bill was passed by the state House on 5 February, but indefinitely tabled by the state Senate, in part thanks to the fortuitous presence on other business of a Purdue professor of mathematics.

For details, including an annotated text of the bill, read the article by D. Singmaster in "The Mathematical Intelligencer" v7 #2, pp 69-72.

23. Where can I get the necessary software to get a "smart" mail system running on my machine that will take advantage of the postings in mod.map? (E.g., pathalias, smail, etc.)

There are a couple of packages available through the supporters of the mod.sources archives. If sites next to you don't have what you want, contact your nearest mod.sources archive, or the moderator. Information on archive sites, and indices of mod.sources back issues are posted regularly in mod.sources and comp.sources.d.

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[Most recent change: 16 February 1987 by spaf@gatech.edu]

Currently, Usenet readers interact with the news using a number of software packages and programs. This article mentions the important ones and a little of their history, gives pointers where you can look for more information and ends with some special notes about "foreign" and "obsolete" software. At the very end is a list of sites from which current versions of the Usenet software may be obtained.

History

Usenet came into being in early 1979 in North Carolina when Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis first thought of hooking two of their computers together (one at Duke University, one at UNC) to exchange mailing lists. Tom and Steve Bellovin put together the first version of the news software using shell scripts and installed it on those first two sites: "unc" and "duke." Steve later rewrote the scripts into C programs, but they were never released beyond "unc" and "duke." Shortly thereafter, Tom and Steve Daniel rewrote the programs for public distribution. This was the "A" news release. At the beginning of 1980 the network consisted of those two sites and "phs" (another machine at Duke), and was described at the January Usenix conference.

In 1981 at U. C. Berkeley, Mark Horton and Matt Glickman rewrote the news software to add functionality and to cope with the ever increasing volume of news -- "A" news was intended for under 100 sites and only a few articles per group per day. This rewrite was the "B" news version. The first public release was version 2.1 in 1982; the 1.* versions were all beta test. As the net grew, the news software was expanded and modified. The last version maintained and released primarily by Mark was 2.10.1

Rick Adams, at the Center for Seismic Studies, took over coordination of the maintenance and enhancement of the news software with the 2.10.2 release in 1984. By this time, the increasing volume of news was becoming a concern, and the mechanism for moderated groups was added to the software at 2.10.2. Moderated groups were inspired by ARPA mailing lists and experience with other bulletin board systems. In late 1986, version 2.11 of news was released, including a number of changes to support a new naming structure for newsgroups, enhanced batching and compression, enhanced ihave/sendme control messages, and other features.

The current release of news is 2.11, patchlevel 3, dated 12/29/86. Article format is specified in RFC¹ 850, last revised in October 1986 (a version is distributed with the news software).

¹ A RFC is a Request For Comment, a de-facto standard in the Internet Community. It is a form of published software standard, done through the Network Information Center (NIC) at SRI. Copies of RFCs are often posted to the net and obtainable from archive sites.}

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A new version of news, becoming known as "C" news, is being developed at the University of Toronto by Geoff Collyer and Henry Spencer. This version is a rewrite of the lowest levels of news to increase article processing speed, decrease article expiration processing and improve the reliability of the news system through better locking, etc. The package is about to go into beta test stage (they have all the beta testers they need, thank you), and will be made available to the Usenet community when it is deemed stable enough. For more information, see the paper "News Need Not Be Slow," published in The Winter 1987 Usenix Technical Conference proceedings.

Two popular screen-oriented news reading interfaces have been developed in the last few years to replace the traditional "readnews" interface. The first of these was "vnews" and it was written by Kenneth Almquist. "vnews" provides a "readnews"-like command interface, but displays articles using direct screen positioning. It appears to have been inspired, to some extent, by the "notes" system (described below). "vnews" is currently distributed with the standard 2.11 news source.

A second, more versatile interface, "rn", was developed by Larry Wall of SDC (now UNISYS) and released in 1984. This interface also uses full-screen display with direct positioning, but it includes many other useful features and is very popular with many regular net readers. The interface includes reading, discarding, and/or processing of articles based on user-definable patterns, the ability to follow "threads of discussions" in newsgroups, and the ability of the user to develop customized macros for display and keyboard interaction. "rn" is currently at release 4.3, patchlevel 40, with a major re-release under development. "rn" is not provided with the standard news software release, but is very widely available due to its popularity.

"notes" is a software package popular at some sites. It uses a different internal organization of articles, and a different interchange format than that of the standard Usenet software. It was inspired by the notesfiles available in the PLATO system and was developed independently from the Usenet news. Eventually, the "notes" network and Usenet were joined via gateways doing (sometimes imperfect) protocol translation. The interface for "notes" is similar to "rn" ("rn" may have been inspired somewhat by "notes") but implements different features, many of which are dictated by the internal organization of "notes." "notes" was written by Ray Essick and Rob Kolstad in 1980-1981 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The first public release of "notes" was at the January 1982 Usenix conference. The current release of notes is version 1.7.0, January 1985.

In March 1986 a package was released implementing news transmission, posting, and reading using the Network News Transfer Protocol (NNTP) (as specified in RFC 977). This protocol allows hosts to exchange articles via TCP/IP connections rather than using the traditional uucp. It also permits users to read and post news (using a modified version of "rn" or other user agents) from machines which cannot or chose not to install the USENET news software. Reading and posting are done using TCP/IP messages to a server host which does run the USENET software. Sites which have many workstations like the Sun and Apollo products find this a convenient way to allow workstation users to read news without having to store articles on each system. Many of the Usenet backbone hosts that are also on the Internet exchange news articles using

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NNTP because the load impact of NNTP is much lower than uucp (and NNTP ensures much faster propagation).

NNTP grew out of independent work in 1984-1985 by Brian Kantor at U. C. San Diego and Phil Lapsley at U. C. Berkeley. The package is currently in release 1.3, and was developed at U. C. Berkeley by Phil Lapsley with help from Erik Fair, Steven Grady, and Mike Meyer, among others. The NNTP package is distributed on the 4.3BSD release tape (although that is version 1.2a and out-of-date) and is also available from the various authors, many backbone hosts, and by anonymous FTP from ucbvax, sdcsvax, and seismo. A new release should be posted to mod.sources in the near future. Reader clients for VMS and TOPS-20 systems should also be available soon.

Special note on "notes" and pre-2.11 news

Users of these systems may note problems in their interactions with the Usenet. In particular, postings may be made by "notes" users to moderated groups but they will not usually propagate throughout the entire Usenet. The same may happen to users of old B news software.

Users of "notes" or old B news software wishing to post to moderated groups should either mail their submissions to the moderator, as listed in the monthly posting of "List of Moderators" in the group "news.lists", or else they should post from a system running up-to-date B news software (i.e., 2.11). "notes" users may obtain some patches from the mod.sources archives which enable recent versions of "notes" to interact moderated groups somewhat properly.

Users of old B news and "notes" are also not able to take advantage of some other current B news features, such as the "checkgroups" message. "notes" continues to be a "foreign" system, and B news versions before 2.10.2 are considered "obsolete." The various maintainers of the Usenet software have never expressed any commitment to maintain backwards compatibility with "foreign" or obsolete news systems and are unlikely to do so; it is the responsibility of the users to maintain compatibility of such software if they wish to continue to interact with the Usenet.

Software versions & availability

You can obtain the version number of your news software by issuing the "v" command in either "vnews" or "readnews." "rn" version is obtainable by typing the "v" command to the top level prompt -- it should currently be 4.3.1.4.

Current software is obtainable from almost any Usenet backbone site. Source to the 'rn' newsreader program is also widely available.

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The following sites have sources to the current news software available for anyone needing a copy:

Site	Contact
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akgua	akgua!usa
felix	felix!bytebug
gatech	gatech!usenet
hao	hao!woods
munnnari	munnnari!kre
philabs	philabs!usenet
rutgers	rutgers!usenet
seismo	seismo!usenet
tektronix	tektronix!news
ulowell	ulowell!usenet

Sources for both news 2.11 and "rn" are also available in the mod.sources archives.. European sites should request the sources from their nearest backbone site.